

Sharpshooting in Göttingen: A Case Study of Cultural Integration in Weimar and Nazi Germany

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In 1927 the leaders of Göttingen's Burgher Sharpshooting Society (*Bürger Schützengesellschaft* or BSG) constructed a new and rather unique target-shooting range (see Figure 1). The thirty-five firing lanes of various lengths, sophisticated signal system for reporting results and special safety features made the Sharpshooting Hall, as one local newspaper critic boasted, 'the most modern of such facilities known in Germany.'² The new range was intended to demonstrate Göttingen's progressive ideas about sharpshooting and increase appreciation of competitive sport shooting. In this conservative-looking and -acting town, the Hall's Bauhaus-style architecture stood out, dramatically highlighting sharpshooting's marriage of old and new trends in the interwar period. Even conservative critics praised its 'stark objectivity' and argued that the 'hatless' roof, oddly enough, somehow fitted 'organically' with the rest of the town's landscape.³ Here modernity and tradition reinforced each other: the Bauhaus-inspired form and high-tech gadgetry updated and promoted the older spirit of sharpshooting, while the familiarity of a well-established cultural and civic activity made the building's novelty more acceptable to the otherwise generally conservative citizens of Göttingen. Like this unique rifle range, sharpshooting (*Schützenwesen*) during the 1920s and 1930s displayed and mediated social and political conflicts in a way that ultimately helped to integrate National Socialism into daily life in Göttingen.

Sharpshooting's dual status as private practice and public demonstration makes it a particularly apt prism through which to study the political meaning

¹ An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the Fifth Congress of the History of Sport in Europe in Madrid, Spain, November 2000. I am grateful to participants there and especially Arnd Krüger for feedback. I would also like to thank Anthony Steinhoff, Dieter Buse, David Crew, Paul Hagenloh and *German History*'s anonymous readers for helpful suggestions. Funding for the research presented here came from the Deutsche Akademische Austausch Dienst, The University of Texas at Austin and Susquehanna University.

² *Göttinger Tageblatt* (hereafter *GT*) 31 July 1927.

³ *Ibid.*



Figure 1: Göttingen's 1927 Sharpshooting Hall.

Courtesy of Städtisches Museum Göttingen.

of everyday cultural activities. Existing literature has detailed the dramatic growth of sharpshooting clubs (*Schützenvereine*) in the early twentieth century, especially after World War I.⁴ Important as this trend was, scholars have been less attentive to an important new dimension that emerged in the

⁴ Norbert Kirchner, *Westfälisches Schützenwesen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Wandel und gegenwärtige Stellung* (Münster and New York, 1992); Barbara Stambolis, 'Schützenvereine in der Gesellschaft des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts: Interdisziplinäre Arbeitsmöglichkeiten am Beispiel historischer Vereinsforschung', *Rheinisch-westfälische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde*, 44 (1999), pp. 171–213, especially 195–96, and 'Nation und Konfession im Spannungsfeld: Aspekte historischer Vereinsforschung am Beispiel Schützenwesens', *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 120 (2000), pp. 199–226, especially 204; Dietmar Klenke, 'Zwischen nationalkriegerischem Gemeinschaftsideal und bürgerlich-ziviler Modernität: Zum Vereinsnationalismus der Sänger, Schützen und Turner im Deutschen Kaiserreich', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 45 (1994), pp. 207–23; Dietmar Sauermann, 'Studien zum Schützenwesen in den Kreisen Minden-Lübbecke und Herford', in Hans Nordsiek (ed.), *An Weser und Wiehen: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Kultur einer Landschaft. Festschrift für Wilhelm Brepohl* (Minden, 1983), pp. 309–22, especially p. 312; Michael Schwartz, 'Schützenvereine im "Dritten Reich": Etappen der Gleichschaltung traditionaler Vereinskultur am Beispiel des ländlich-katholischen Schützenvereinswesens Westfalens 1933–1939', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 79 (1997), pp. 439–84, especially 448. More generally, see Horst Kanitz, 'Sozialgeschichtliche Entwicklungslinien des Vereinswesens', in Walter Bühler et al. (eds), *Lokale Freizeitvereine: Entwicklung, Aufgaben, Tendenzen* (St. Aug.in, 1978), p. 82; Heinz Schmitt, *Das Vereinsleben der Stadt Weinheim an der Bergstraße: volkskundliche Untersuchung zum kulturellen Leben einer Mittelstadt* (Weinheim, 1963), p. 13; Konrad Dussel and Matthias Frese, 'Von traditioneller Vereinskultur zu moderner Massenkultur? Vereins- und Freizeitangebote in einer südwestdeutschen Kleinstadt 1920–1960', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 331 (1995), pp. 72–84; Siegfried Weichlein, *Sozialmilieus und politische Kultur in der Weimarer Republik. Lebenswelt, Vereinskultur, Politik in Hessen* (Göttingen, 1996), pp. 59–60.

1920s: the emphasis on sharpshooting as an individual activity. Sharpshooting leaders in Göttingen increasingly believed that every man in town should be a sharpshooter. They therefore encouraged more men to join the *Bürger Schützengesellschaft*. This affiliation offered access to the shooting range and the ability to compete in the yearly Sharpshooting Festival but did not involve the regular meetings and sociability that membership in a *Schützenverein* did. Supporters saw this move as a step toward making sharpshooting into what one newspaper reporter called ‘something that concerned everyone (*eine allgemeine Volkssache*)’.⁵ This tension between club and individual shooting drove the gradual reshaping of what it meant to be a ‘shooter’ (*Schütze*), a Göttinger and even a German man.⁶ Conservative leaders in particular used this dynamic to recruit more sharpshooters and, in turn, celebrate these activities as lived examples of a *Volksgemeinschaft* led by German men. National Socialist officials promoted a society in which participation was defined by gender and race, not democracy. Scholarship on twentieth-century German associational life tends to view the Third Reich (and indeed East Germany) as a hostile environment for voluntary associations.⁷ While Hitler’s régime did seek to control and instrumentalize sharpshooting *Vereine*, most clubs continued to play an important role in sharpshooting and public life. Moreover, it was sharpshooting leaders themselves in the mid-1920s who first promoted individual shooting, a trend that gave the Nazis the rhetorical and institutional building blocks for changing sharpshooting after 1933.

Each summer the Sharpshooting Festival served as the most important venue for constructing and articulating sharpshooting’s meaning. A major event for the whole town and a social ritual of the highest order, the festival came to be seen as an image of Göttingen itself in these troubled times, an event through which sharpshooters, civic officials and local media displayed various and contested meanings of sharpshooting and being a ‘shooter’. While scholars have studied political festivals specifically as

⁵ *GT*, 6 Aug. 1925.

⁶ Sharpshooters and supporters have used the false etymological connection between the noun *Schütze* and the verb *schützen* to evoke sharpshooting’s ‘ancient’ roots as local militias and police forces and their symbolic role as protectors of town traditions (Kirchner, *Schützenwesen*, pp. 3–4).

⁷ Heinrich Best (ed.), *Vereine in Deutschland: Vom Geheimbund zur freien gesellschaftlichen Organisation* (Bonn, 1993); Walter Bühler, Hortst Kanitz and Hans-Jörg Siewert (eds), *Lokale Freizeitvereine: Entwicklung, Aufgaben, Tendenzen* (St. Augustin, 1978); Friedhelm Kröll, Stephan Barjes and Rudi Wiengarn, *Vereine: Geschichte—Politik—Kultur* (Frankfurt/Main, 1982). Other studies, on the other hand, point to voluntary associations’ adaptability: e.g., Rudy Koshar, *Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism: Marburg, 1880–1935* (Chapel Hill and London, 1986), pp. 245–71; William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: the experience of a single German town 1922–1945* (rev. edn New York, 1984), pp. 214 and 222–32; Karin Gehrmann, ‘Das Schützensilber der Stadt Ahrweiler aus den Jahren 1653 bis 1986’ (Ph.D. diss., University of Cologne, 1988), pp. 34–37 and 84–87; and especially Schwartz, ‘Schützenvereine’, pp. 439–84.

cultural events,⁸ this analysis begins with the cultural activity of sharpshooting and explains its political function.⁹ Taking cues from anthropological notions of liminality, this study pays particular attention to the rhetoric around and about sharpshooting festivals.¹⁰ Sharpshooting leaders and supporters (chiefly reporters and editors in Göttingen's newspapers) used sharpshooting activities and discourses about them to enhance their authority and sharpshooting's place in public life during both the Weimar Republic and Third Reich. Sharpshooting's expansion and new resonance in the 1920s provided the institutional and ideological basis for its integration into the Third Reich.

We must look at local context in order to understand the process of Nazism's integration into German society. Celia Applegate and Alon Confino have shown that in modern Germany it was precisely at the local level that the most important negotiation of political and cultural change took place.¹¹ This process is especially true, as the following study shows, of National Socialism. The permeation of Nazi ideas into the fabric of local society was largely possible not because of brute force or coercion, but rather because of the ways

⁸ Dieter Düding (ed.), *Öffentliche Festkultur: politische Feste in Deutschland von der Aufklärung bis zum ersten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg, 1988); Manfred Hettling and Paul Nolte (eds), *Bürgerliche Feste: symbolische Formen politische Handelns im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1993); Manuela Achilles, "'Blutdurst' und 'Symbolhunger': Zur Semantik von Blut und Erde", in Walter Delabar et al. (eds), *Spielräume des einzelnen: Deutsche Literatur in der Weimarer Republik und im Dritten Reich* (Berlin, 1999), pp. 185–216.

⁹ Following Clifford Geertz's Weberian definition of culture, I view sharpshooting as a cultural activity, something to which participants ascribed their own meaning and which in turn shaped their worldview; see especially Geertz, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', in *id.*, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), pp. 3–32.

¹⁰ Here 'liminal' implies a space created by public rituals in which social norms are both questioned and reaffirmed; see especially Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, 1979), pp. vii and 95, and *id.*, *Blazing the Trail: way marks in the exploration of symbols* (Tucson, 1992), p. 153. Perhaps more relevant is Turner's broader concept of 'liminoid', a symbolic space in which discursive power relations also shape these moments' potential ('Comments and Conclusions' in Barbara A. Babcock, ed., *The Reversible World*, Ithaca, 1978, p. 281). Roger Abrahams and Richard Bauman maintain, moreover, that festivals seem 'to draw together opposing elements in the ... societies in which they occur, and to draw them together more closely and harmoniously than at any other time in the year' ('Ranges of Festival Behavior', in Babcock, *Reversible World*, p. 206). See also Don Handelman, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 15.

¹¹ Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: the German idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, 1990) and Alon Confino, *The Nation as Local Metaphor: Württemberg, imperial Germany, and national memory, 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill, 1997). Local studies that bear out this general argument include Allen, *Seizure*; Jeremy Noakes, *The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony: 1921–1933* (Oxford, 1971); Koshar, *Social Life*; Adelheid von Saldern (ed.), *Stadt und Moderne: Hannover in der Weimarer Republik* (Hamburg, 1989); Oded Heilbrunner, *Catholicism, Political Culture, and the Countryside: A Social History of the Nazi Party in South Germany* (Ann Arbor, 1998); Andrew Stuart Bergerson, *Ordinary Germans in Extraordinary Times: The Nazi Revolution in Hildesheim* (Bloomington, 2004); Jennifer Jenkins, *Provincial Modernity: Local Culture and Liberal Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Hamburg* (Ithaca, 2003); Anthony Steinhoff, 'Religion as Urban Culture: A View from Strasbourg, 1870–1914', *Journal of Urban History*, 30 (2004), pp. 152–88.

in which Nazis exploited a receptive cultural and political environment that developed between the mid-1920s and mid-1930s.¹² The history of sharpshooting in Göttingen reveals the complexity of this process.

I: (Re)building and (Re)defining Sharpshooting after World War I

The Versailles Peace Treaty acted as one of the most important catalysts for promoting sharpshooting after 1919. Its mandated reduction of Germany's armed forces and prohibition of military weapons at target ranges effectively gave sharpshooters a monopoly on shooting and helped to foster sharpshooting's paramilitary character. The wartime experiences of millions of German men also helped to normalize a cultural activity centred on guns. Changes in the wake of the war and revolution opened new avenues for expanded participation in political and cultural life, often with positive consequences for local élites.¹³ The prohibition of military rifles at target ranges also fostered competitive sport shooting, which used small-bore weapons.¹⁴

Sports in general became convenient substitutes for military exercises in Weimar Germany. In Göttingen and elsewhere sharpshooting clubs frequently sprang from Gymnastics Clubs (*Turnvereine*). Göttingen's first sharpshooting *Verein* grew out of the Academic Gymnastics Club in 1863. Across Germany in the 1920s, groups formerly affiliated with the armed forces set up their own organizations to promote *Volkssport* or military sports (*Wehrsport*) such as shooting, riding and calisthenics, often working closely yet quietly with army officials.¹⁵ Conservative and right-wing groups such as the *Stahlhelm*, the Young German Order and the SA also advocated paramilitary sports as

¹² For an exemplary analysis of this process, see Adelheid von Saldern, 'Cultural Conflicts, Popular Mass Culture, and the Question of Nazi Success: The Eilenriede Motorcycle Races, 1924–39', *German Studies Review*, 15 (May 1992), pp. 317–38.

¹³ In Göttingen, as elsewhere in Germany, the Revolution did not fundamentally alter the make-up of local politics, but the political engagement it encouraged had far-reaching consequences for political and cultural life. See Martina Kresse, 'Die Stadt Göttingen im Übergang vom Kaiserreich zur Weimarer Republik', unpublished Schriftliche Hausarbeit im Rahmen der fachwissenschaftlichen Prüfung für das Lehramt an Gymnasium, University of Göttingen, 1980, Stadt Archiv Göttingen (hereafter 'StadtAGö'): III B 328; Ulrich Popplow, 'Göttingen in der Novemberrevolution', *Göttinger Jahrbuch*, 24 (1976), pp. 205–42; Barbara Marshall, 'The Political Development of German University Towns in the Weimar Republic: Göttingen and Münster 1918–1933' (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1972), especially pp. ii–iii, 27–43 and 345–49; Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998).

¹⁴ Versailles Peace Treaty §§177 and 178, as well as §1 of the Demilitarization Law (printed in *Göttinger Zeitung* (hereafter *GZ*) and *GT*, 7 July 1921); Günther Meinhardt, *600 Jahre Bürger-Schützen-Gesellschaft: 1392–1992* (hereafter *BSG*, Gudensberg-Gleichen, 1992), p. 198; Stambolis, 'Nation', p. 204.

¹⁵ Christiane Eisenberg, 'The Middle Class and Competition: Some Considerations of the Beginnings of Modern Sport in England and Germany', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 7, 2 (1990), p. 265; Hermann Bach, 'Volks- und Wehrsport in der Weimarer Republik', *Sportwissenschaft*, 11 (1981), pp. 273–94; Michael Barrett, 'Soldiers, Sportsmen, and Politicians. Military Sports in Germany, 1924–1935' (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1977).

means to subvert the Versailles Treaty and the new republic.¹⁶ Even members of leftist groups like the Reich Banner Red-Black-Gold and Red Front Fighting League trained in military sports for their own protection against conservative paramilitary organizations and in defence of the republic.¹⁷ Most sharpshooting organizations in Göttingen claimed to be apolitical. However, conservative commentators in particular viewed militarized and politicized sports such as sharpshooting as outright challenges to the Versailles Treaty and the Weimar Republic itself.

Selective memory of and myths about sharpshooting before World War I fuelled imagination about what sharpshooting could become in the 1920s. Founded in 1392, Göttingen's umbrella *Bürger Schützengesellschaft* had served as a local militia and police force until the seventeenth century. This revived organization and new individual voluntary associations all cultivated this history.¹⁸ These groups cooperated closely with the army regiment that was stationed in Göttingen after 1871.¹⁹ Göttingen's Veterans Association (*Kriegerverein*) formed its own Association of Former Marksmen and Sharpshooters in 1913 to organize military men's participation in sharpshooting activities.²⁰ Shooting clubs from Göttingen and nearby villages, along with representatives from other voluntary associations, made the Sharpshooting Festival each summer an expanding and increasingly important public event. Popular diversions such as beer and sausages, amusement park rides, side shows and dancing also attracted more and more spectators to the yearly event. With new clubs and target ranges opening across Germany, sharpshooting's place in society grew during the decade or so before World War I.²¹

Amidst the difficulties after the war, many sharpshooting leaders and supporters looked back at the years before 1914 as a time when sharpshooting seemed to unite Göttingen. When shooters and civic officials began to rebuild sharpshooting in the 1920s, they often based their benchmarks for success on 'invented traditions' of the late Kaiserreich.²² Many shooters, for instance,

¹⁶ In Göttingen the right-wing Young German Order provided the seeds for the 'Scharnhorst' Sharpshooting Club in 1923. Especially after 1933 the SA became a popular means for competing at the Sharpshooting Festival.

¹⁷ Bach, 'Wehrsport', pp. 278–88; Barrett, 'Soldiers', pp. 67–70.

¹⁸ This development was part of associational life's broader expansion, beginning in the late 18th century; see Thomas Nipperdey, 'Verein als soziales Struktur in Deutschland im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert', in Hartmut Boockmann *et al.* (eds), *Geschichtswissenschaft und Vereinswesen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1972), pp. 3–44; Klaus Tenfelde, 'Die Erfahrung des Vereinswesens während der industriellen Revolution in Deutschland (1850–1873)', in Otto Dann (ed.), *Vereinswesen und bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland* (Munich, 1984); and Heinrich Best (ed.), *Verein in Deutschland: vom Geheimbund zur freien gesellschaftlichen Organization* (Bonn, 1993).

¹⁹ Meinhardt, *BSG*, pp. 165–93.

²⁰ Like the 1863 Club, the Veterans group boasted a solidly middle-class membership (StadtAGö: Pol.-Dir. XXV Fach 146, Nr. 12, Ab. A, 1–2).

²¹ Kirchner, *Schützenwesen*, charts on pp. 31 and 84.

²² The phrase is taken from Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

wished to believe that prewar festivals, which emphasized old-fashioned ranks (*Stände*) and mythical concepts of citizenship, served as an antidote to the divisive society of the Weimar Republic. In the volatile 1920s this selective nostalgia actually shaped sharpshooting's development in Göttingen as much as the real changes in participation and spectatorship did.

Göttingen's social and political conservatism helped keep the discourses about sharpshooting focused on the past and in the hands of the élite. Despite an influx of workers in the early twentieth century, the city's reputation and its political leadership remained strongly middle-class because of the many pensioners, military personnel, professors, students, and bureaucrats there.²³ Many professors at the prestigious Georg August University in particular cast doubt on the validity of the republican 'system'.²⁴ Workers and their Social Democratic party remained a visible and vocal minority but, unlike in manufacturing towns, never managed to gain control of local institutions. Göttingen's overwhelming Protestant majority (close to 90% during the Weimar era) unified conservative thought and action.²⁵ Many top civic offices remained in the same hands for much of the first half of the century, while the town council changed frequently and moved gradually to the right between 1919 and 1934.²⁶ Throughout the Weimar era, right-wing organizations garnered support from local élites (such as professors and businessmen) and appealed to students and lower middle-class citizens through agitation and violence. By the late 1920s the National Socialists had proved to be the most effective of such groups at energizing broad segments of Göttingen's population and, as a result, grew into the primary nationalist opposition party in Göttingen.²⁷ As in many smaller cities, local 'notables' (*Honoratioren*) simultaneously mitigated and facilitated changes by continuing to lead both civic administration and cultural organizations. The Lord Mayor (*Oberbürgermeister*), for instance, acted as ceremonial head of the *Bürger Schützengesellschaft*. City senators always spoke at Festival events and sat on the leadership board of the Society.

Göttingen's first postwar Sharpshooting Festival in 1921 exemplified efforts to create 'tradition' and return to 'normality' in ways that politicized sharpshooting.

²³ Adelheid von Saldern, 'Göttingen im Kaiserreich', in Rudolf von Thadden and Günter J. Tittel (eds), *Göttingen: Geschichte einer Universitätsstadt, Band 3: Von der preußischen Mittelstadt zur süd-niedersächsischen Großstadt 1866–1989* (Göttingen, 1999), pp. 14–56, and Saldern 'Zur Entwicklung der Parteien in Göttingen während der Weimarer Republik', *Göttinger Jahrbuch*, 19 (1971), p. 171.

²⁴ Hans Joachim Dahms, 'Die Universität Göttingen 1918 bis 1989,' in Thadden and Tittel, *Göttingen*, pp. 395–410.

²⁵ Marshall, 'Development', pp. 338–41 and 352–55. Confessing Catholics amounted to 8.4% of the population; those not affiliated totalled 2.5%; Jews were just 1.1% (*Göttinger Gemeindeblatt*, 38, 17 May 1930, StadtArchivGö: VI Cb 2). For evidence of this difference, see Frank Bösch, *Das konservative Milieu: Vereinskultur und lokale Sammlungspolitik in ost- und west-deutschen Regionen [1900–1960]* (Göttingen, 2002) and Weichlein, *Sozialmilieus*, esp. Chap. 3.

²⁶ Significantly, not one local official, police officer, or judge was removed after the 1918 Revolution in Göttingen (Marshall, 'Development', pp. 346–48).

²⁷ Marshall, 'Development,' pp. 243–66 and 288–319.

Before and during the festival local papers attacked the restrictions placed on Germany by the Versailles Treaty and celebrated a recent visit by General Hindenburg.²⁸ Press coverage of the festival highlighted Göttingers' joy at this event, contrasting it to the war and subsequent economic and political turmoil.²⁹ Sharpshooting leaders tried to place events within a context of prewar images of the city and offered a wide array of activities and entertainment. The newspapers reported large turnouts for all events.³⁰

The grand historical parade that opened the festival featured representatives from traditional guilds and *Stände*, sharpshooting clubs, other voluntary associations and members of the *Schützengesellschaft*, all in traditional dress, marching to the music of three bands and carrying dozens of colourful flags. Göttingers decorated their houses and shops with flags and greenery and braved record temperatures (40°C) to line the streets. At the traditional opening evening (*Kommersabend*) that followed, city and sharpshooting leaders welcomed shooters, the many other *Vereine* present and their guests to a boisterous dinner under a big circus tent at the Sharpshooting Grounds. In the months leading up to the festival, sharpshooting groups had staged their own target competitions at the city's shooting range to select members to represent them at the festival. Those club members, along with individuals shooting courtesy of the *Bürger Schützengesellschaft*, then competed at the city's shooting range over the next several days for twelve rifle- and one pistol-shooting prizes.³¹ The trophies—large hand-painted targets, small engraved silver medallions, or goblets—were awarded at another big beer-soaked event on the Thursday night. Visitors swarmed the festival grounds each night to visit the booths filled with food and drink and to enjoy the 'American' amusement park, complete with roller coaster. Heinz Koch, the city's leading cultural critic and local editor for the arch-conservative and powerful *Göttinger Tageblatt*, claimed that this 'most popular festival' illustrated 'a people's courage to go on living' and brought Germans together in a fraternal environment. Koch hailed this *Volksfest* as a place where 'all class and party differences that unfortunately shape Germans' thinking and business fall

²⁸ The *Tageblatt*, Göttingen's largest daily paper with an aggressive nationalist slant, railed against 'France's Outrageous Lies' on 19 July 1921. Even the normally cool and liberal-centre *Göttinger Zeitung*, the town's second largest daily, decried 'France's Chauvinism' and demanded that Göttingers 'wake up' (13 and 15 July 1921). As it frequently did throughout the interwar era, the *Tageblatt* also printed anti-Semitic articles on 'The Terrible Results of Jewish Rule' in the Soviet Union (*GT*, 16 July 1921). On the political slant of Göttingen's newspapers, see Eckhard Sürig, *Göttinger Zeitungen: Ein pressegeschichtlicher und bibliographischer Führer mit Standortnachweis* (Göttingen, 1985), pp. 17–20 and 39–55. On the *Tageblatt*'s anti-Semitism, see Nora Funke, 'Der Antisemitismus im Spiegel der Göttinger Presse in den Jahren 1920, 1925, 1930 und 1935', unpublished Semesterarbeit Göttingen (1962), StadtAGö: I C 264, especially p. 87.

²⁹ For these events and those described below, see *GZ* and *GT*, 19 July 1921; *GT*, 21 and 26 July 1921.

³⁰ *GZ*, 19 July 1921 and *GT*, 22 July 1921.

³¹ The number of prizes rose steadily hereafter. In 1925 nineteen prizes were awarded; in 1932 there were only sixteen; in 1934 the number peaked at thirty-five and fell to thirty-one in 1936 (*GZ*, 22 July 1921; *GT*, 4 Aug. 1932; *GT*, 24 July 1934; *GT*, 27 July 1936).

away, so that at least at the Sharpshooting Festival Germans are a single fraternal people (*ein einzig Volk von Brüdern*).³²

Like Koch, organizers attempted to display a vision of German society that recalled Kaiserreich-era public life and tried to portray the *Bürger Schützen-gesellschaft* as an emblem of local traditions and unity. But this nostalgic image of sharpshooting attracted spectators in part because it was coupled with a large dance floor, an amusement park, booths filled with food and drink and souvenirs, shiny automobiles in the parade and sporting competition—in a word, popular and consumer culture that could help attendees forget their daily problems. Newspaper reports also heralded the ‘modern’ amenities (new traffic patterns, telephones, buses and cars, fire safety) at this festival and commented on the ‘thousands and thousands’ of visitors from Göttingen and the surrounding area. They stressed that the festival helped to stimulate the struggling local economy and ‘offered the unemployed a good opportunity for work’.³³ Sharpshooting functioned here as both expression of and building block for public life.

As the 1921 festival drew to a close, the *Tageblatt* used these events to discuss national political concerns. An article by DNVP (Deutschnationale Volkspartei) Reichstag representative Heinrich Lind asked, ‘Should we celebrate festivals at this time?’ Lind concluded that,

[o]ur German Volk has suffered so much financially and emotionally under bondage to France that this really is not the atmosphere for heady celebrations. Now is the time, however, for *Heimat* celebrations associated with memorial commemorations. Indeed, it is a psychological necessity to commemorate and truly venerate those heroes from all levels of our nation who lie now in foreign soil. It is also a psychological necessity to bow before God Almighty in open nature surrounded by waving fields and gather strength for the great battle under the slogan ‘Rebuild our Fatherland and Free our Volk’.³⁴

Lind’s comments encapsulate the first attempts in the 1920s to construct sharpshooting as a local means for national renewal.

II: Becoming ‘eine allgemeine Volkssache’ in the 1920s

Jeffrey Herf defines ‘reactionary modernism’ as a conservative desire in the interwar years for ‘reconciliation between antimodernist, romantic, and irrationalist ideas present in German nationalism and ... modern technology’.³⁵

³² *GT*, 19 July 1921. Koch reviewed many concerts, theatre pieces, and films and covered numerous local events during his tenure of over forty years at the *Göttinger Tageblatt* that began in 1919. But he normally took only the more important reviews or stories. He reported on Göttingen’s Sharpshooting Festival only twice in the interwar period—this year and in 1927, when the new Sharpshooting Hall opened. His gushing presence alone (this article even includes an earthy and ebullient poem!) points to the significance of this first Weimar-era festival.

³³ *GZ*, 14, 15, 19, 28 July 1921; *GT*, 14, 15, 22, 29, July 1921.

³⁴ *GT*, 21 July 1921.

³⁵ Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: technology, culture and politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 1.

In the wake of war, revolution and economic hardship, sharpshooting advocates sought a similar rapprochement, albeit on a smaller scale. With the help of conservative commentators and local politicians, they used 'traditions' from the Kaiserreich era to modernize and popularize sharpshooting. Even some left-wing sharpshooters and newspaper supporters aided in the promotion of what might be called progressive nostalgia. Beginning in the early 1920s shooters and commentators used sharpshooting activities to exemplify what it meant to be both a 'Göttinger' and a 'German', especially as more men from different social groups took part in sharpshooting activities. By looking to a mythical past for inspiration, though, many leaders and commentators actually marshalled the egalitarian ideas spawned by the war, the revolution and the new republic to imagine alternatives to Weimar democracy.³⁶

During the 1920s the number of sharpshooting clubs and participants in Göttingen grew dramatically. This expansion occurred across Germany, especially in the northern and western regions, where sharpshooting was more prevalent.³⁷ Göttingen's Voluntary Association Police registered 267 active clubs during the Weimar period, many of which were founded in the early twenties.³⁸ For nearly 500 years, the overarching *Bürger Schützengesellschaft* had been the city's only sharpshooting organization, joined by a few new *Schützenvereine* before World War I. During the Weimar years, thirteen new sharpshooting clubs formed to offer more direct routes to participation, while numerous other *Vereine* fielded their own shooting divisions at the yearly festival.³⁹ Until the middle of the decade, the vast majority of shooters came from the so-called *Mittelstand* of shopkeepers, skilled artisans, and minor professionals, and their clubs tended to espouse conservative politics.⁴⁰

This social and political homogeneity changed in 1924 when Göttingen workers set up two sharpshooting clubs, the Workers Sharpshooting Club and

³⁶ Peter Fritzsche describes this synthesis of public action and anti-politicism as a form of populism in *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany* (New York and Oxford, 1990) and *Germans into Nazis*.

³⁷ See footnote 4 and Heinrich Harmjanz and Eric Roehr (eds), *Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde* (Leipzig, 1937), charts 10 and 11.

³⁸ StadtAGö: Pol-Dir. XXV Fach 152 Nr. 9 Ab. G, 1868–1956, pp. 146.2–153.30; StadtAGö: AHR I B3 F.22, Nr. 8, Bd. 2, Erlaß einer Ordnung über die Erhebung einer Kartensteuer und einer Lustbarkeitssteuer 1924–32, Versammlung der Vorstände der Göttinger Verbände und Vereine am Mittwoch, den 30. Sept. 1931.

³⁹ Additionally, sharpshooting *Vereine* from the nearby large villages of Weende, Geismar and Grone took part in Göttingen's sharpshooting festivals, as did shooting divisions of hunting clubs and veterans organizations. The actual number of sharpshooting organizations was therefore probably closer to 20 by 1930.

⁴⁰ StadtAGö: Pol-Dir. XXV Fach 147, Nr. 8: *Schützenverein Göttingen (Bürger-Schützengesellschaft)* Spec. 1862–1934, pp. 89–90; Meinhardt, *BSG*, pp. 198–99; Meinhardt, *600 Jahre Göttinger Schützen. Vom Bürgeraufgebot zum Schießsport* (Göttingen, 1975), p. 104; C. Kellerman, W. Leßner and W. Schulze, 'Vereinsgeschichte 1923–1988', *Schützenverein Scharnhorst e.V. von 1923* (Göttingen, 1988), p. 15.

the Association of Proletarian Sharpshooters.⁴¹ As vocal supporters of the Weimar Republic and the Social Democratic Party, club members named their best shooter each year 'president' rather than 'king,' as did all other groups.⁴² Their use of the republic's flag stood in marked contrast to the prevalent imperial symbols, paramilitary banners and, as early as 1924, swastikas in festival parades.⁴³ Workers had taken part in sharpshooting activities since before World War I but were generally unable to move into leadership positions and, until 1924, had lacked their own club.⁴⁴ Most individual workers, moreover, could not afford to maintain gun, uniform and ammunition; clubs offered collective means to defray such costs. The Workers Sharpshooting Club also included at least one Jew as a founding member, second-hand dealer and leftist leader Karl Kahn.⁴⁵ Extant records mention no other Jewish sharpshooters, despite the fact that Jews in Göttingen came disproportionately from the old *Mittelstand* of merchants and small business owners, who were otherwise heavily represented in sharpshooting organizations.⁴⁶

Generally clubs were fairly small during the 1920s, with around twenty to thirty members, though some boasted fifty or more.⁴⁷ Collectively sharpshooting clubs made up a critical core of two to three hundred members in

⁴¹ StadtAGö: Pol.-Dir. XXV Fach 147, Nr. 21, Ab. B and StadtAGö: Pol.-Dir. XXV: Vereinpolizei Ab. B, Fach 147, Nr. 22. The latter was short-lived and left little archival evidence, but the Workers Sharpshooting Club continued until 1935.

⁴² Meinhardt, *BSG*, pp. 199–200 and 308. One of the founding members and leaders of the working club, Fritz Wittorf, had been a leader of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and its gymnastics club since 1914; he served as SPD representative to the *Magistrat* from 1922 to 1924 and again from 1929 to 1933 (Adelheid von Saldern, *Auf dem Wege Zum Arbeiter Reformismus: Parteialltag in sozialdemokratischer Provinz Göttingen [1870–1920]*, Frankfurt, 1984, p. 300; *Göttinger Adressbücher*, StadtAGö: Z 53).

⁴³ GZ, 24 June 1924.

⁴⁴ In 1908 an SPD member from one working-class club was elected to the city's top position overseeing voluntary associations. His influence was limited, though. After he assumed the position of *Schafferramt*, the conservative lord mayor stripped the post of any political authority (Meinhardt, *Schützen*, pp. 97–98).

⁴⁵ StadtAGö: Pol.-Dir. XXV Fach 147, Nr. 22, Ab. B, p. 2. Kahn had been head of the local SPD branch in 1909, until he clashed with party leadership; during World War I he joined the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) (Saldern, *Arbeiter-Reformismus*, p. 294).

⁴⁶ Arend Smid, 'Die Juden in Göttingen zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik', unpublished Hauptseminararbeit, University of Göttingen, 1989, pp. 3–4 and 11–20 (StadtAGö: E 214). Statistics on Göttingen's Jewish population (around 1% during the 1920s) and the portion of those working in *Mittelstand* professions (over 60%) correspond to national figures; see Avraham Barkai and Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, vol. 4: *Renewal and Destruction, 1918–1945*, ed. Michael Meyer (New York, 1998), pp. 32–35.

⁴⁷ During the mid-twenties, three *Vereine*, including the Workers Club, listed 18 members; the well-established 1863 Club had 36 on their roster (StadtAGö: Pol.-Dir. XXV Fach 147, Nr. 20, Ab. B, p. 7; Nr. 24, Ab. B, p. 3; and Nr. 22, Ab. B, p. 2; Nr. 8, p. 89). Club Scharnhorst had between 24 and 38 members (Kellerman, 'Vereinsgeschichte', p. 94). One local branch of a larger organization from Braunschweig boasted 50 regular members and 21 'corporate' members from the student fraternities (StadtAGö: Pol.-Dir. XXV F. 147, Nr. 29, Ab. B, p. 1). Club Lower Saxony listed 57 members in 1923 (StadtAGö: Pol.-Dir. XXV Ab. B F. 147, Nr. 19, p. 4). The Göttingen branch of the Hanover-based Small Bore Sharpshooting Club Republic had 55 members in 1929 (Hauptstaatsarchiv Hannover [hereafter 'HSta. Hannover'] Hann. 310 II A Nr. 2 II, p. 40).

Göttingen. The *Bürger Schützengesellschaft* coordinated sharpshooting activities such as clubs' use of the Sharpshooting Hall and the logistics of the Sharpshooting Festival. Already in 1923, 156 individual shooters who were not members of a *Schützenverein* participated in sharpshooting activities under the aegis of the Society, a form of participation that would grow in the 1920s.⁴⁸

Beginning in 1925, sharpshooting leaders and supporters sought to make shooters out of all adult males in the town by promoting non-*Verein* sharpshooting, attracting young shooters and fostering competitive sport shooting.⁴⁹ While the umbrella Society welcomed the founding of new clubs each year, leaders worried about their inherent exclusivity. During the 1925 Festival sharpshooting leaders and supporters in the press celebrated the social breadth of participants, from professors to workers.⁵⁰ Just before the festival that year August Welge, a member of the 1863 Club and head of the *Schützengesellschaft*, told assembled representatives from thirty *Vereine* that 'in sharpshooting any restriction at all is out of the question' and that 'circulating rumours to the contrary must be emphatically stamped out.' More clubs from more social groups were to take part in sharpshooting activities that year than ever before—no fewer than 90 to 100 sharpshooting and other voluntary associations, Welge promised.⁵¹ Yet clubs, by definition, restricted participation.

Welge announced, therefore, that any man could become a lifetime member of the *Bürger Schützengesellschaft* for only one Mark, a membership fee that was considerably less than other clubs in town.⁵² This affiliation did not offer the regular group target practice and sociability of the *Vereine*, but it gave individual shooters access to the shooting range and the ability to take part in the Sharpshooting Festival each summer. A significant portion of the money required to subsidize these memberships—about 450 Marks per year—came directly from the city government, an indication that civic officials also supported this expansion of sharpshooting.⁵³ Welge maintained that this offer demonstrated 'the popular (*volkstümliche*) character of German sharpshooting'.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 4, 16 Feb. 1923.

⁴⁹ As was the practice in some rural areas and small towns (Kirchner, *Schützenwesen*, pp. 7–8; Alfred Kirchhoff, *500 Jahre Celler Schützenwesen: Ein Stück Heimatgeschichte aus der alten Herzogstadt Celle*, Celle, 1928, p. 145).

⁵⁰ *GT*, 28 June, 1, 2, 4, 8, and 18 Aug. 1925; *GZ*, 2 and 8 Aug. 1925.

⁵¹ *GT*, 28 June 1925.

⁵² These shooters still had to pay 30–60 Pfennigs for practice targets and up to 3 Marks for those used in festival competitions (StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 4, '1927 Schiessordnung der Bürger-Schützen-Gesellschaft Göttingen e.V.' §10 and 13–16), but one newspaper report indicated that the Society would also pay for uniforms and other expenses (*GT*, 18 Aug. 1925). The Association of Proletariat Sharpshooters, probably the cheapest club in town, collected 2.40 Marks each year from members around this time (StadtAGö: Pol.-Dir. XXV: Vereinpolizei Ab. B, Fach 147, Nr. 22); yearly dues for one of the small-calibre clubs were 12 Marks, plus 1.5 Pfennigs per bullet when practicing (StadtAGö: Pol.-Dir. XXV: Vereinpolizei Fach 147, Nr. 24, p. 2).

⁵³ StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 4, '1927 Schiessordnung der Bürger-Schützen-Gesellschaft Göttingen e.V.' §10 and 13.

⁵⁴ *GT*, 28 June 1925.

This move also served to strengthen the society *vis-à-vis* the *Vereine*, especially the new working class clubs, whose presence threatened the traditional élite's control of sharpshooting activities in town.⁵⁵ While voluntary associations remained the backbone of sharpshooting in Göttingen and continued to multiply in the 1920s, the Society's expansion did prompt more individual shooting in the second half of the decade.⁵⁶ Welge claimed that welcoming any man as a sharpshooter would make the 1925 Festival 'not merely a club festival (*Vereinsfest*) or special opportunity' for those in sharpshooting clubs, but rather, 'a true *Volksfest*, one for the entire population of Göttingen.'⁵⁷

Sharpshooters also attracted more shooters in the mid-twenties by setting up youth divisions, much as gymnastics clubs had done since the late nineteenth century. Sharpshooting Club Lower Saxony created a youth division in 1923, and the 1863 and Scharnhorst Clubs soon followed. Over 100 shooters from ten to sixteen years of age marched in the 1925 festival parade. In 1926 the *Bürger Schützengesellschaft* announced an 'organizational expansion' to include a new Youth Sharpshooting Division for 'young Germans'—young male Germans, that is—between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. Any boy could join, even if he was already a member of another group. The low two-Mark entry fee was intended to attract future leaders of sharpshooting without discriminating against those who lacked financial resources. The BSG called this expansion 'striking power' for the 'Fatherland movement', but 'in the widest, completely unpolitical sense', since 'it is broadly and doubtlessly known that the Burgher Sharpshooting [Society] is a party-politically neutral, unpolitical association'. The *Tageblatt* article describing the plan assumed that this move 'would be heartily welcomed by anyone who knows that the party-political fuss of today has hardly shown itself to be very competent in supporting the Fatherland', echoing the timbre of the Harmful Publications Act, passed by the Reichstag in 1926.⁵⁸ Old-fashioned conservatives in Göttingen may also have thought that turning boys on to sharpshooting would distract from the potential attraction of radical, action-oriented nationalism (such as that espoused by the Nazis) which threatened to become more popular with young people than 'traditional' illiberalism and monarchism.⁵⁹

The growing popularity of competitive sport shooting, finally, served to update 'traditional' sharpshooting and even bring together shooters with

⁵⁵ Early in 1929 the small-bore sharpshooting club Republic, which was based in Hanover and affiliated with the Communist Party, also opened a branch in Göttingen and listed 55 members (HSta. Hannover Hann. 310 II A Nr. 2 II, p. 40).

⁵⁶ One report of 1926, for instance, claims that 300 men shot through the Burger Sharpshooting Society (*GT*, 3 July 1926), double the number listed in 1923.

⁵⁷ *GZ*, 2 Aug. 1925.

⁵⁸ *GT*, 8 April 1926. Margaret Stieg, 'The 1926 German Law to Protect Youth against Trash and Dirt: Moral Protectionism in a Democracy', *Central European History*, 32, 1 (1990), pp. 22–56 and Klaus Petersen, 'The Harmful Publications (Young Persons) Act of 1926. Literary Censorship and the Politics of Morality in the Weimar Republic', *German Studies Review*, 15 (1992), pp. 505–23.

⁵⁹ Noakes, *Nazi Party*, p. 86; Marshall, 'Development', p. 230–31.

different world-views. Sport shooting (*Schießen*) differed from traditional sharpshooting (*Schützen*) by emphasizing intensive training with more precise, small-bore guns. In many parts of Germany, this distinction divided sharpshooters and eventually provided a set of paramilitary principles on which the Nazis based their support for shooting activities.⁶⁰ In Göttingen, however, the impetus for sport shooting came from groups representing a variety of political persuasions. Both the right-leaning Scharnhorst Club (founded in 1923 out of the Young German Order) and the Workers Club had always included competitive sport shooting in their activities. And members of the nominally communist Club Republic used small-bore guns exclusively.⁶¹ In November 1925 sport shooters from across Germany set up the Reich Centre for Promoting Small-Bore Sharpshooting in Germany.⁶² Seven exclusively small-bore sport clubs were founded in Göttingen in the 1920s, and many other sharpshooting and sport clubs fielded sport-shooting divisions.⁶³ While most sport shooters came from the middle-class professions, many shooters, especially the less affluent, could appreciate the fact that small-bore guns cost less to buy and maintain. Newspaper coverage, which had usually divided competitive and 'traditional' shooting into sport and local pages respectively, began in the mid-twenties to merge them. One reporter from the regional, business-oriented *Niedersächsische Morgenpost* argued in 1925 that competitive sports offered the best way to update and popularize sharpshooting, 'since we live in the age of sport and that's exactly what enthalls the broad masses.'⁶⁴ A regional newspaper devoted to sharpshooting in 1928 similarly maintained that increased coverage of sport shooting in local newspapers 'could easily supply the movement with thousands of new friends'.⁶⁵

The glistening white Bauhaus-style Sharpshooting Hall, unveiled in 1927, served as a space for promoting all three of these developments. The large number of firing lanes offered more space for new shooters, both those in clubs and those part of the society's 1925 expansion. And the new hall's technical attractions were designed, as Heinz Koch maintained, to 'carry

⁶⁰ Schwartz, 'Schützenvereine', pp. 448–50; Stambolis, 'Nation', pp. 214–19.

⁶¹ HSta. Hannover Hann. 310 II A Nr. 2 II, p. 60.

⁶² Julius Stumpf, 'Die Entwicklung des "Deutschen Schützenverbandes e.V. im DRL", sein Aufbau und seine Ziele', in Wilhelm Ewald (ed.), *Wir Schützen* (Duisburg, 1938), p. 380.

⁶³ The Small-Bore Sport Club, 1923 (StadtAGö: Pol-Dir. XXV Fach 147, Nr. 20, Ab. B); the Association of Small-Bore Sharpshooting, 1924 (StadtAGö: Pol-Dir. XXV Fach 147, Nr. 26, Ab. B); the Indoor Sharpshooting Club, 1924 (StadtAGö: Pol-Dir. XXV Fach 147, Nr. 24, Ab. B); a local branch of the Small-Bore Sport Club of Brunswick and Southern Hanover, 1927 (StadtAGö: Pol-Dir. XXV Fach 147, Nr. 29, Ab. B); Göttingen's division of Club Republic, 1929 (HSta. Hannover Hann. 310 II A Nr. 2 II); the Small-Bore Sharpshooting Club 'Hurrah (*Horrido*)', 1929 (StadtAGö: Pol-Dir. Fach 32 Nr. 18); and the Sportshooting Society of a local insurance company, founded in 1932.

⁶⁴ *Niedersächsische Morgenpost* (hereafter NM), 17 July 1925.

⁶⁵ K. Jans, 'Schießsport und Presse', *Schützenzeitung für Niedersachsen*, 45 (April 1928). Other articles in this paper expound upon the value and promotion of sport-shooting; e.g. 'Inzweifeln das Kleinkaliberschießen charakterbildend?', Nr. 80 (Jan. 1931).

the joy for sport shooting to the broadest sections of the population'.⁶⁶ Even before the hall was built, the society's leaders maintained that the 'cultivation of shooting is something for the entire *Volk*' and that this spirit would shape the new hall.⁶⁷ This symbol of 'a new flowering of Göttingen's ancient sharpshooting' used modern technology and modernist aesthetics to shore up élite men's control over sharpshooting activities and their meaning in the public sphere.⁶⁸

By expanding the established connection between sharpshooting and civic duty to include all adult men (and even teenage boys), the leaders of Göttingen's Sharpshooting Society updated, reaffirmed and bolstered an older notion of town citizenship that ignored women's recently won full voting rights. At the yearly festival, in particular, the gendered distinction between those acting (only men) and those watching (women, children and men who did not shoot) underscored traditional male control of this important ritual of civic pride. One commentator in the *Tageblatt* opined that fostering sharpshooting was 'something that concerns everyone (*eine allgemeine Volkssache*)' yet emphasized that 'it is important to encourage German men (*die deutsche Männerwelt*) not to ignore the cultivation of shooting.' This reporter argued at the close of the 1925 festival that idea of sharpshooting as every German man's duty fell on 'fertile soil' in Göttingen.⁶⁹ In his explanation of the Society's expansion that year, Welge went further to say that 'the German Volk's present powerlessness and troubles demand that everyone dedicate greater active attention to the sharpshooting movement (*Schützenbewegung*).'⁷⁰ The implication that a popular, male-dominated free time activity might mollify Germany's problems better than the 'party-political fuss' thus pitted 'traditional' masculine sharpshooting against the foil of new 'feminized' democracy.⁷¹

Social Democrats, by contrast, saw popular participation and democracy as mutually reinforcing. Yet the presence of their all-male clubs contributed to the notion that men controlled this ritual of civic duty, even if workers felt shut out of sharpshooting leadership.⁷² Similarly, Göttingen's Social Democratic paper, *The Volksblatt*, occasionally contributed to the nostalgic discourse that celebrated older social models by hailing the sharpshooting festival of the past as 'a *Fest* of the people (*Fest des Volkes*)', even as they promoted republicanism and denounced the monarchical leanings of the *Bürger*

⁶⁶ *GT*, 31 July 1927.

⁶⁷ Reported in *GT*, 23 Jan. 1926.

⁶⁸ Koch in *GT*, 31 July 1927.

⁶⁹ *GT*, 6 Aug. 1925.

⁷⁰ *GT*, 28 June 1925.

⁷¹ Eve Rosenhaft makes this point more generally in 'Women, gender and the limits of political history in the age of "mass politics"', in James Retallack and Larry Eugene Jones (eds), *Elections, Mass Politics and Social Change in Modern Germany. New Perspectives* (New York, 1992), pp. 149–73.

⁷² Karen Hagemann argues that this situation was all too common in the Social Democratic Party and affiliated groups in '“Equal but not the Same”: The Social Democratic Women's Movement in the Weimar Republic,' in Roger Fletcher (ed.), *Bernstein to Brandt. A Short History of German Social Democracy* (London, 1987), pp. 133–43.

Schützengesellschaft.⁷³ Workers may have participated in shooting festivities, but as one *Volksblatt* article pointed out, the BSG's leadership lacked any worker representation and sheltered 'right-wing extremists'. Lending credence to the BSG's 1925 expansion and attempt at inclusiveness, though, the writer conceded that the BSG had 'put every effort into making this [1925] festival a *Volksfest*'. A 'unified *Volksfest* is not an impossibility', the reporter concluded, but 'first there must be clear and consistent good will on all sides.'⁷⁴

More conservative supporters saw evidence of this 'good will' in the breadth of participation during the 1920s. Above all, they sought to wed the mythical image of a pre-democratic and allegedly conflict-free society with mass participation when they insisted that the Sharpshooting Festival 'must become a living expression of the German *Volksgemeinschaft*', an equation that appeared more frequently in speeches and newspaper reports beginning in 1925.⁷⁵ Middle-class sharpshooters and newspapers argued that the festival could reinforce unity and overcome divisions in the city.⁷⁶ 'Göttingen sharpshooting and the Göttingen Sharpshooting Festival exclude no one', one writer in the cautiously liberal *Göttinger Zeitung* proclaimed, asserting that 'especially in Göttingen, where rank and class difference even today play a rather considerable role, we need a festival that knows no division and values everyone simply as participants and Göttingen citizens.'⁷⁷ Right-wing supporters went further, especially in the rabidly nationalist *Tageblatt*. One reporter, for instance, claimed that 'very few movements demonstrate solidarity as well as sharpshooting does internally and externally' and declared that sharpshooters must put aside political and confessional divisions in order to make their festival 'a living expression of the German *Volksgemeinschaft*.'⁷⁸ Social Democrats, by contrast, recognized that this supposedly apolitical call to unity served to reinforce traditional élites and promote the Nazi party.⁷⁹

Revealing its liberal tendencies, the *Göttinger Zeitung* printed a telling letter toward the end of the 1929 festival that saw sharpshooting as a potential bridge between republicanism and the desire for a *Volksgemeinschaft*. Calling himself 'one who otherwise enjoys going to sharpshooting festivals', the anonymous author lamented that the 'beautiful institution' that was Göttingen's Sharpshooting Hall had not been flying the republic's flag and argued that 'to realize the *Volksgemeinschaft*' the hall should unfurl both republican and imperial colors.⁸⁰ Social Democrats in the *Volksblatt* had already mentioned the flag's disappearance on 1 August.⁸¹ Three days later the head of the Bürger

⁷³ *Göttinger Volksblatt* (hereafter *VB*) 4, 8 Aug. 1925, quote from *VB*, 3 Aug. 1927.

⁷⁴ *VB*, 8 Aug. 1925.

⁷⁵ *GT*, 28 June 1925; see also *GT*, 1 Aug. 1925, *GT*, 3 July 1926 and *GZ*, 2 Aug. 1927.

⁷⁶ *GT*, 28 June 1925, *GZ* and *NM*, 17 July 1925 and *GT*, 1, 18 Aug. 1925; quote in *GZ*, 2 Aug. 1925.

⁷⁷ *GZ*, 2 Aug. 1925.

⁷⁸ *GT*, 1 Aug., 28 June 1925.

⁷⁹ *VB*, 4 Aug. 1925.

⁸⁰ *GZ*, 3 Aug. 1929.

⁸¹ *VB*, 1 Aug. 1929.

Schützengesellschaft attempted to smooth over this 'minor discord' by explaining that 'some boys' had stolen the republic's flag and said that it would be replaced soon.⁸² While none of the newspapers tell us the final outcome, this story underscores the political significance of sharpshooting's place in public life.

By the mid-1920s the yearly festival had become a litmus test for civic prosperity and solidarity. While pre-1914 festivals remained the mythical standard of an 'authentic' sharpshooting and folk festival, sharpshooting leaders and supporters were developing a successful formula that used elements of modern consumer culture to promote archaic notions about social organization. Directed newspaper hype and increased coverage helped attract larger audiences and emphasized the events' growing significance for economic and cultural life.⁸³ Sharpshooting could, in some commentators' minds, counter the effects of mass and consumer culture. A *Morgenpost* article maintained that the Sharpshooting Festival could be a 'healing process' and an antidote to the great 'pleasure craving' and 'cocainism of the entertainment industry' that had been spawned by war and hardship.⁸⁴ Rather than heal this craving, though, the festival gave visitors the chance to consume both established traditions and new attractions. Göttingers and visitors from outside the city came for a number of exciting diversions such as simulated horse races and steamship cruises, motorcycle races, giant slides, circuses, freak shows, roller-coasters and even jazz music.⁸⁵ The *Morgenpost* recognized that incorporating such new attractions would help to 'maintain this historic, centuries-old *Völksfest*'.⁸⁶ Just as they had celebrated the new hall, reports of 1920s festivals consistently praised events of the 'new sharpshooting' that exhibited the 'same spirit' as festivals of prewar years.⁸⁷ And the greater number of shooters and spectators lent support to the idea that sharpshooting demonstrated for Göttingen and perhaps Germany that mass participation could in fact make the myth of unity real. Especially after 1925, these ideas equated traditional elite authority with organic unity, on the one hand, and parliamentary democracy with frustrating division, on the other. As the political events of the late 1920s and early 1930s further fractured German society, this fantasy of unity held even greater appeal in Göttingen.

III: Crisis and Integration, 1929–1932

At the opening night of the 1929 Sharpshooting Festival, Göttingen Senator August Reuper summed up the transformation of sharpshooters in the

⁸² *GZ*, 4 Aug. 1929.

⁸³ *GT*, 4 Aug. 1925.

⁸⁴ *NM*, 2 Aug. 1925.

⁸⁵ Adelheid von Saldern describes the wide-spread obsession with new technology and its potentially *völkisch* function in 'Cultural Conflicts'.

⁸⁶ *NM*, 17 July 1925.

⁸⁷ Quote in *GZ*, 24 June 1924; see also *GZ*, 22 June, 2 July 1924, and *VB*, 3 Aug. 1927.

modern era thus: 'once they were important in protecting the city, today they are important in protecting its unity.'⁸⁸ A German Democratic Party (DDP) representative in the city council (*Magistrat*) since 1919, Reuper had, ironically, just been voted out of power in a divisive local election that gave right-wing parties, led by National Socialists, an absolute majority in Göttingen's local government. His hopeful tone in 1929 highlights attempts by traditional élites to use discourses about sharpshooting to encourage unity in an era that was characterized by anything but. This rhetoric of organic unity ultimately benefited Hitler's party most directly.

It is almost a truism to claim that the Great Depression that began in 1929 vaulted the National Socialist Party to power. Financial strain unleashed by the American stock market crash compounded an already fragile German economy and, in turn, further undermined support for political parties supporting the Weimar Republic. Although the Nazis saw their share of the vote rise steadily in Göttingen and across Germany after 1929, it was the party's disingenuous claim to be above party politics that won them support from Germans who were frustrated by the political wranglings of the Weimar Republic. Other political organizations, such as the Communist Party, also defined themselves against the entire 'system' of Weimar democracy. In this context of anti-politics, the realm of cultural life and free time activities became just as important a battleground for the hearts of Germans as party rallies or election campaigns. Public rituals such as sharpshooting festivals had been important media for promoting notions of local and national unity since the early 1920s. In the vitriolic and often violent atmosphere of the late twenties and early thirties, such public fora and discourses became even more important.

Sharpshooting's ability to serve as both a metaphor and medium for political change grew out of organizational and discursive changes that began in the mid-twenties. In Göttingen sharpshooting turned out to be an effective means for integrating ideology into everyday life. By the 1930s well-established notions about sharpshooting as masculine duty, symbol of civic unity and carrier of important 'traditions' gave conservatives a set of ideas and experiences that could act as an anchor for their ideology. For conservatives the idea of sharpshooting, especially its public rituals, pointed toward a potential and 'apolitical' *Volksgemeinschaft* that challenged the political and social fabric of the Weimar 'system' with equal measures of reactionary nostalgia, revolutionary vision and racist nationalism. Leftists and some liberals, on the other hand, viewed sharpshooting's expansion as a corollary to greater democracy and equality. But Göttingen was a city that gave early and strong support to Hitler's party, where conservative élites had overseen sharpshooting activities and shaped many of the ideas about its meaning. And unlike sharpshooting groups in many Catholic regions, those in Göttingen

⁸⁸ GZ, 30 July 1929.

did not cling to confessional identities that sometimes mitigated the Nazification of sharpshooting.⁸⁹ In this context the common focus on sharpshooting by disparate political groups helped bolster conservative notions about 'unity'. Sharpshooting leaders and supporters, informed by a kind of progressive nostalgia, experimented with new ways of engaging, defining, and promoting this activity while laying claim to archaic ideas about stability and social organization.⁹⁰

Elections in 1929 and 1930 illustrated the ways in which the Nazi party used this local syntax to discuss national issues. In the civic elections of May 1929, right-wing parties generally benefited from the fractious politics caused in part by increased taxes and an unbalanced budget from the year before. From a field of 157 candidates, National Socialists led a right-wing bloc that won an absolute majority in Göttingen's town council. And when the coalition collapsed a year later, the Nazi Party alone controlled the council.⁹¹ This local election (and one death) also completely turned over the normally stable *Magistrat* that year, bringing both Nazi Party and leftist bloc candidates to this august body. Three of the four non-elected *Magistrat* positions did remain unchanged, complementing the rightward move of elected bodies with a consolidation of traditional élite authority.⁹² In the Reichstag elections of September 1930, National Socialists received nearly 38% of Göttingen's vote (compared to about 18% nationally). The Nazi campaign in Göttingen built upon the local budgetary crisis and increased political violence around town, echoing national propaganda. The party had enjoyed certain advantages in Göttingen since its foundation in 1922, including free advertising in the *Göttinger Tageblatt* and tacit support from some local police officers.⁹³ By the end of the decade, the National Socialists had fused these local connections with the national economic and political crisis to make theirs the most popular party in Göttingen.

The 1932 Sharpshooting Festival, in many ways, stood as a local response to Germany's growing political crisis and demonstrated the Nazification of everyday life already under way in Göttingen. While events themselves—the

⁸⁹ See especially Stambolis, 'Schützenvereine' and 'Nation'; as well as Kirchner, *Schützenwesen*; Schwartz, 'Schützenvereine'; Gehrman, 'Schützensilber'; Weichlein, *Sozialmilieus*, Chap. 3 and Bösch, *Milieu*. Religious overtones were, for instance, absent at Hanover sharpshooting festivals (Andreas Krasset, 'Zwischen Kirme und Korn. Das hannoversche Schützenfest in den zwanziger und dreißiger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts', in Hans-Dieter Schmidt (ed.), *Feste und Feiern in Hannover*, Bielefeld, 1995, pp. 231–43).

⁹⁰ Like Jeffrey Herf, Peter Fritzsche and Peter Reichel have pointed out the power of this combination for the Third Reich; see Fritzsche, 'Nazi Modern', *Modernism/Modernity*, 3, 1 (1996), pp. 1–22 and Reichel, *Der schöne Schein des Dritten Reiches. Faszination und Gewalt des Faschismus* (Munich and Vienna, 1991).

⁹¹ Marshall, 'Development', pp. 318–21. The National Socialist victory in Göttingen also represented its second greatest local success that year in the entire country (Noakes, *Nazi Party*, pp. 131–32).

⁹² *Göttinger Adressbücher* (StadtAGö: Z 53).

⁹³ Marshall, 'Development', pp. 159–73 and 266–71.

competitions, the beery events under the big festival tent, the amusement park and other diversions—were much like those of previous years, this festival's meaning and impact differed chiefly because organizers and commentators used the festivities to highlight Germany's economic and political crises.⁹⁴ The 1932 festival came on the heels of von Papen's assumption of emergency powers on 20 July 1932. It began on 31 July, the day of the national election that gave the National Socialist Party a plurality in the Reichstag and eventually led to Hitler's appointment as Chancellor. Ten days before the festival began, Hitler had spoken to nearly 30,000 supporters in Göttingen, and eight days later another of his speeches was broadcast in the town square. The right-leaning *Tageblatt* compared the campaign atmosphere in Göttingen to a 'civil war'; the Social Democratic *Volksblatt* named it 'the election of bloody terror and lies'.⁹⁵

Conservatives in particular used the deepening economic depression and the Nazi Party's substantial victory (37.8% of the national vote and 51% in Göttingen) to make even greater claims about what sharpshooting meant for Göttingen. At the opening dinner in 1932, leaders of the Society reiterated a now common theme, that sharpshooting 'served the *Volk* and the Fatherland'.⁹⁶ The next day Mayor Paul Warmbold (*Magistrat* member since 1911 and Mayor since 1926) spoke in detail at the Sharpshooting Breakfast about the 'catastrophic financial crisis' that gripped Göttingen and Germany. He maintained that Germany would grow again when it escaped its present condition of 'tributary slavery' and could enter into arms negotiations. 'That is no threat', he continued after enthusiastic applause, 'rather it should show the world that we are inspired by a discernable survival instinct'.⁹⁷ A *Tageblatt* report placed these national economic woes in the local context by commenting that people came to the festival that year in record numbers—'Only the money is missing'.⁹⁸ Here, then, was a political figure of standing for twenty years, using his speech to sharpshooters to explain that the economic crisis visibly affecting Göttingers at the festival stemmed from economic and military restrictions placed on Germany, restrictions against which the Nazi Party had just waged a successful electoral campaign. The *Tageblatt*, which greeted the National Socialist victory jubilantly, called the 1932 festival one of the society's greatest moments in its over 500-year history, since it coincided with such a 'memorable' election day.⁹⁹ On the other hand, the moderately liberal *Göttinger Zeitung*, uneasy with Nazi ideas, attempted to avoid politics all together in its reporting on

⁹⁴ See especially *GT*, 29 July–2 Aug. 1932, and *GZ*, 1, 2 Aug. 1932.

⁹⁵ *GT*, 4 July 1932, *VB*, 1 Aug. 1932.

⁹⁶ *GZ*, 1 Aug. 1932.

⁹⁷ *GT*, 2 Aug. 1932. The revanchist militarism of Hitler's party also benefited from official and unofficial links between shooting groups and government-supported military *Volksports* designed to circumvent the Versailles Treaty (Barrett, 'Soldiers', pp. 1–76 and 319–21).

⁹⁸ *GT*, 1 Aug. 1932.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

sharpshooting. The *Volksblatt* virtually ignored the festival, so total was its attention to the life-or-death political struggle against Nazism that summer.

The mingling of political rhetoric with reporting on sharpshooting events in 1932 made clear the possibility of a mutually reinforcing relationship between sharpshooting and National Socialism. Conservative shooters, civic leaders and supporters in the *Tageblatt* drew upon current Nazi campaign rhetoric about *völkisch* definitions of the nation to support their long-standing and often-repeated ideas about sharpshooting's ability to exemplify a local unity that ignored political divisions. Such efforts, in turn, helped ground Nazi ideology in Göttingen and introduced a more politicized image of daily life into this familiar and comfortable atmosphere.

As National Socialist ideology acquired more support in Göttingen, conservative designs for making sharpshooting a model for civic duty thus found a popular political analogue in Nazi plans for a new Germany. Indeed, many shooters—sometimes even those not sympathetic to Nazism—praised sharpshooting's ability to imagine a society without political strife, one that drew from both local experience and national ideas. Sharpshooting activities themselves did not directly support a particular political ideology. However, sharpshooters and cultural purveyors had, since the mid-twenties, been comparing sharpshooting to *völkisch* ideas that National Socialists used very effectively beginning in 1929. Rather than act as a Trojan horse for a directed and centralized Nazi conquest of this important local activity, sharpshooting organizations and Nazi supporters simply took advantage of circumstances. The exploitation of sharpshooting was in fact a two-way street.

IV: The Process of 'Coordination', 1933–1934

Sharpshooting developed in the Third Reich through a negotiated process that embedded National Socialist ideology in Göttingers' everyday lives. Policies that had expanded participation since the mid-twenties transformed sharpshooting's meaning as much as Nazi directives did. National Socialist leaders and supporters in Göttingen gradually altered sharpshooting's organization and function by directing existing trends toward greater militarization and politicization. While the impetus for change increasingly came from outside Göttingen, the Nazification of sharpshooting worked through local channels and according to local conditions. Attempts to reshape sharpshooting succeeded chiefly when the régime's ideas garnered support from shooters themselves and reinforced what had been practiced before 1933. The tug-of-war between generally conservative, pro-military groups like sharpshooting organizations and the new régime vividly reveals the complex process of *Gleichschaltung* or 'coordination'.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Allen describes the impact of personalities and local networks on the 'coordination' of associations in nearby Northeim in *Nazi Seizure*, pp. 284–87.

The Third Reich's love of the military and physical fitness made sports an especially critical area for moulding Germans' daily activities.¹⁰¹ Beginning in 1933, Third Reich ministers, police officials and Party representatives together sought to 'coordinate' all voluntary associations, to place those activities and organizations under greater state authority and to reflect National Socialist ideology. This process of *Gleichschaltung* aimed to subsume every voluntary association in Germany under a corporate organization that would represent individual associations at the highest levels of governmental and party activity and encourage cooperation between groups toward the common goal of creating a *Volksgemeinschaft*. Nazi leaders began their coordination of sports, including sharpshooting, in the spring of 1933 by replacing the powerful German National Committee for Physical Education (founded in 1896) with the National Socialist Physical Education Union, under the leadership of Reich Sport Führer Hans von Tschammer und Osten. Individual activities like sharpshooting were further subdivided and directed from above. This method of using existing policies and institutions helped government officials exert a measure of control over most sporting activities.¹⁰²

The story of Göttingen's Workers Sharpshooting Club makes clear the importance of local context in the Third Reich's coordination of free-time activities. The February 1933 laws 'For the Protection of *Volk* and State' seemed to spell the demise of clubs associated with left-wing parties or demonstrably supportive of the Weimar Republic. Even before the Nazis came to power, police in Göttingen had viewed with suspicion Social Democratic-oriented clubs such as the Water Sport Association and Reich Banner Black-Red-Gold, as well as communist clubs like the Sport Club 'Forwards' Fighting Society. The February 1933 laws gave them the authority and mandate to close down these voluntary associations and others like them by the autumn.¹⁰³ The Workers

¹⁰¹ Barrett, 'Soldiers', pp. 77–102 and 170–204.

¹⁰² Sports historians have previously argued that high-level political and bureaucratic changes demonstrate the Third Reich's strict control of sports; see for example G.A. Carr, 'The Synchronization of Sport and Physical Education under National Socialism', *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education*, 10, 2 (Dec. 1979), pp. 15–35. Recent research, however, depicts a more cooperative process; see Arnd Krüger, 'Sieg Heil to the Most Glorious Era of German Sport: Continuity and Change in the Modern Sports Movement', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 4, 1 (1987), pp. 11–14 and 'Strength through Joy: The culture of consent under fascism, Nazism and Francoism', in Jim Riordan and Arnd Krüger (eds), *The International Politics of Sport in the 20th Century* (London, 1999), pp. 67–89.

¹⁰³ Wassersportvereinigung Göttingen 1908 e.V. '75 Jahre Wassersportvereinigung Göttingen 1908 e.V.: 1908–1983' (Göttingen, 1983), pp. 19–32 and StadtAGö: Pol.Dir. XXV Fach 147, Nr. 30, p. 15; StadtAGö: Pol.-Dir. XXV Fach 153, Nr. 21, pp. 5–21 and Fach 155, Nr. 11, pp. 1–4. Police records do not record the closing, for instance, of the Worker Bicycle Club 'Star' or Göttingen's Independent Gymnastics Club, but those *Vereine* too were outlawed by the February 1933 laws. After being pressured by police and right-wing groups for some time, other leftist organizations in Göttingen likewise closed (or were closed) by the summer of 1933; see Joachim Bons, Viola Denecke and Kornelia Duwe, 'Im "Volksheim" war immer was los!' in Kornelia Duwe, Carola Gottschalk, Marianne Koerner (eds), *Göttingen ohne Gänseliesel: Texte und Bilder zur Stadtgeschichte* (2nd edn Gudesberg-Gleichen, 1989), pp. 68–71. More generally see Cordulla Tollmien, 'Nationalsozialismus in Göttingen (1933–1945)' (Ph.D. diss., University of Göttingen, 1999), pp. 65–71 and 99–105.

Sharpshooting Club, however, managed to survive and participate in sharpshooting activities until 1935, despite its loyalty to the SPD and Weimar Republic and a membership that had included important leftist leaders in town.¹⁰⁴

In March of 1933, the Workers Club dissolved because, as the executive committee explained, all its members were unemployed and could no longer afford to shoot at all. A month later, though, Mayor and Police Director, August Gnade, acknowledged that the *Verein* had been 'refounded' with the same name, under much the same leadership and with the permission of the Göttingen *Bürger Schützengesellschaft*.¹⁰⁵ Gnade asked August Welge, still the head of the Society, to see 'if a more *völkisch*-oriented, dependable growth in membership was discernable' in the reformed club. After visiting several meetings, Welge reported back that the '*vaterländisch* activity of the Workers Sharpshooting Club is absolutely ensured' and asked that the government note as much. In November 1933 the club joined with the *Bürger Schützengesellschaft* and the four leading middle-class *Vereine* in calling for all shooters and Germans to vote 'yes' in the plebiscite to validate Hitler's growing authority in Germany.¹⁰⁶ However, just six months later Welge informed police that two recent visits to club meetings had revealed only 10% of members joining leaders in saying 'Sieg Heil'. For an already suspect club under close scrutiny, this visible lack of National Socialist zeal probably sealed its fate.

Still, the state police did not close down the club for over two years. Indeed, in his speech at the 1934 Sharpshooting Festival, Gnade specifically praised the club's desire to participate in sharpshooting activities, even with 80% of its members unemployed.¹⁰⁷ The group was finally outlawed in December 1935, though police records offer no reason for the *Verbot*. Local and regional police did go to great lengths to pay the leadership a fair price for its confiscated goods.¹⁰⁸ After its closure former members of the Workers Club may

¹⁰⁴ StadtAGö: Pol.-Dir. XXV Fach 147, Nr. 22, Ab. B, p. 2. See footnotes 41 and 44 on Fritz Wittorf and Karl Kahn. Supported by worker groups in 1918, Kahn was attacked by conservatives explicitly as a Jew (Popplow, 'Novemberrevolution', pp. 227–28). Surprisingly, neither the Sharpshooting Society, nor conservative writers, nor the police mentioned his background in the Third Reich.

¹⁰⁵ Karl Kahn left Göttingen around this time, after SA members vandalized his shop, so the police could not use his membership as an excuse to invoke the February 1933 laws; he died at the age of 61 during a visit in February 1934 (Uta Schäfer-Richter and Jörg Klein, *Die jüdischen Bürger im Kreis Göttingen 1933–1945: Göttingen, Hann. Münden, Duderstadt; ein Gedenkbuch*, Göttingen, 1992, p. 114).

¹⁰⁶ *Deutsche Schützenzeitung*, 10 (Nov. 1933).

¹⁰⁷ StadtAGö: Kl. Erwerbungen Nr. 80, 1, Gnade speech at 1934 Schützenfest, p. 12.

¹⁰⁸ In keeping with the Third Reich's plans to promote individual shooting over clubs, a number of the confiscated goods went to the Burgher Sharpshooting Society (StadtAGö: Pol.-Dir. XXV Fach 147, Nr. 21, Ab. B, pp. 3–4, 7–8 and 11–34). Other suppressed left-wing groups, such as the Reich's Banner Black-Red-Gold, were not compensated for their losses (StadtAGö: Pol.-Dir. XXV Fach 153, Nr. 21, pp. 10–23).

have either joined other sharpshooting clubs or, like a growing number of men in town, participated as individuals at sharpshooting festivals.

Other voluntary associations in Göttingen fared much better in the Third Reich, though their relations with Hitler's régime were not always completely smooth.¹⁰⁹ The new régime relied upon support from existing *Vereine* and even offered financial assistance to some groups.¹¹⁰ At the same time local officials encouraged individuals to participate by joining the *Bürger Schützen-gesellschaft* or to shoot as members of the SA, SS and Hitler Youth. The number of sharpshooting clubs founded throughout Germany, in fact, dropped precipitously in the 1930s.¹¹¹ Thirteen new sharpshooting clubs had begun in Göttingen during the Weimar years; only one did so under the Third Reich. Regional and local officials argued that it was now the 'duty' of all 'people's comrades' (*Volksgenossen*) to join the Burgher Sharpshooting Society.¹¹² They meant only men of course, reinforcing the idea that the important citizen leaders of the Third Reich were Aryan men who could handle guns.¹¹³ At the 1934 Sharpshooting Festival, Mayor Gnade highlighted the Third Reich's seemingly contradictory message. He called voluntary associations collectively one of the 'organizational pillars ... necessary for the *Volks*' existence' and groups for which everyone should be very thankful, and he praised the clubs' great work in popularizing sport shooting by promoting 'a true Volksfest' at the Sharpshooting Festival and thus allowing 'all Germans' (*das ganze Volk*) to participate in this task. In the same speech, though, he attacked clubs as divisive and 'laughable'. Indeed, even as he tried to excise the 'liberal' elements from voluntary associations, Gnade stressed that 'The value of the old clubs would not be eliminated, rather, expanded and linked to new goals' and praised voluntary associations' continued growth.¹¹⁴ This strategy of simultaneously undermining, assisting and reshaping voluntary associations incorporated any potential threat from these organizations into a Nazified vision of sharpshooting.

By using National Socialist ideology to describe sharpshooting's purpose and define who could participate, civic leaders confirmed the *völkisch* definition of state and society that had been a part of sharpshooting's discourse in

¹⁰⁹ For instance, two solidly conservative organizations, the St. Hubertus Hunting Club and the Association of Former Corps Students, dissolved themselves in 1937. The latter in particular had been an influential club whose membership read like a 'who's who' of Göttingen élites. Neither police report gives a reason for the closure. Financial difficulties may have been the root, or perhaps Nazi officials hinted that these two organized activities were now well represented by 'official' groups within the Reich (NdsHStA Hannover: Hann.172 Göttingen Acc.17/62, Nr. 23 and Nr. 29).

¹¹⁰ StadtAGö: AHR II A 13 Nr. 124, Bd. 3, Verschiedene Vereinssachen, 1933–1952.

¹¹¹ Sauermann, 'Studien', p. 312.

¹¹² StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 16 Bd. I, 12 Feb. 1934.

¹¹³ StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 16 Bd. I, Normal-Satzung des Deutschen Schießsportverbands, from Beilage der *Deutschen Schützenzeitung*, 49 (8 Dec. 1933).

¹¹⁴ StadtAGö: Kl. Erwerbungen Nr. 80 IV, 1, Gnade's 1934 Report to Reichssportkommissar, pp. 5–6 and Gnade's 1934 Festival Speech, p. 11.

Göttingen since the mid-1920s. Gnade extolled ‘men in the sharpshooting movement ... to take up the task of maintaining our *Volk* and blessing our descendants’. Sharpshooters, he told those at the 1934 festival, were soldiers both in the traditional sense and in the broader fight against ‘primitive peoples’ and the ‘profiteering and rapacious Jewish liberal worldview’.¹¹⁵ New regulations from the Reich-wide German Sport Shooting Association in turn allowed only Aryan Germans to join sharpshooting organizations or participate in sharpshooting activities.¹¹⁶ This rule effectively barred Jews and other state-defined minorities from participating in sharpshooting any longer. In Göttingen, where hardly any Jews had been members of sharpshooting clubs, this dictate made manifest the racist implications of terms such as *Volkssport*, *Volksfest* and *Volksgemeinschaft* that had been used since the 1920s to describe sharpshooting activities.

In late 1933 Third Reich officials changed associational life significantly by implementing the ‘Führer Principle’, the dictate that individual groups conform to National Socialist notions of authoritarian leadership. In December 1933 Göttingen police and Nazi Party officials forced the *Bürger Schützen-gesellschaft* to name Gnade as ‘Führer’ of the Society instead of an elected representative from the 1863 Club.¹¹⁷ A well-connected member of the political élite, SS *Sturmabfuhrer* and popular Nazi ‘old fighter’ who would become Lord Mayor in 1938, Gnade assisted the coordination of many cultural activities in Göttingen. ‘Pappa Gnade’ was essentially an old-fashioned law-and-order conservative who exploited and, to a certain extent, tempered National Socialism in Göttingen.¹¹⁸ First elected Senator in 1929 on the Nazi ticket, he spearheaded the pre-Depression rightward move in Göttingen politics. His appointment as head of the society paralleled leadership changes across Germany. Reich leaders told all shooting organizations to adopt the Führer Principle ‘through the traditional or internal business of the club.’¹¹⁹ Celebratory histories of sharpshooting in Göttingen point to this change as evidence of the Third Reich’s attack on sharpshooting’s ‘democratic’ nature.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ StadtAGö: Kl. Erwerbungen Nr. 80, 1, Gnade 1934 Speech, p. 19.

¹¹⁶ StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 16 Bd. I, Normal-Satzung des Deutschen Schießsportverbands (1933).

¹¹⁷ StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 16 Bd. I, 8 Dec. 1933 and StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 16 Bd. II, 22 Dec. 1933 report.

¹¹⁸ As Police Director, for instance, he helped carry out the first local round-ups of Jews and communists in 1933. Yet he was in 1935 reprimanded for questioning the legal validity of orders from his superiors and was almost thrown into a concentration camp in 1943 for aiding a local cinema owner arrested as a ‘state enemy’. See Tollmien, ‘Nationalsozialismus’, pp. 78–80, 138 and 223–28 and David Imhoof, ‘Guns, Opera, and Movies: Local Culture in Interwar Germany, Göttingen 1919–1938’ (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 2000), pp. 24–29 and 350–59.

¹¹⁹ StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 16 Bd. I, Normal-Satzung des Deutschen Schießsportverband (1933).

¹²⁰ Mindhardt, *BSG*, pp. 215–16 and *Schützen*, pp. 122–23; Hans Damrau and Heiner Schröder, *125 Jahre Schützenverein von 1863 e.V. Göttingen* (Göttingen, 1988), pp. 93–97. The protocol book of the Scharnhorst club, however, reveals no conflict or change in the club’s regular activities as a result of this change (Protokolbuch, Schützenverein Scharnhorst e.V. Göttingen 1925–1957 [private collection, in author’s possession]).

Some clubs may have resented this intrusion, yet they continued to operate publicly in the Third Reich. The few clubs, on the other hand, that had viewed supporting democratic club governance and supporting democratic national governance as the same thing were closed down by the Hitler régime.

Committed to both National Socialism and 'Göttingen's interests' (however narrowly defined), Gnade tried to synchronize the Third Reich's proposed changes for sharpshooting with established institutions, ideas and individuals in Göttingen. He and his supporters claimed that only in the Third Reich could sharpshooting's real *völkisch* (and thus restrictive) egalitarianism come to fruition. In December 1933 he unveiled a substantial reorganization of Göttingen sharpshooting—the Third Reich's most dramatic step toward coordination—under the motto 'Shooting must become a *Volkssport*'. Expressly politicizing the motivation to participate in sharpshooting, the plan emphasized military preparedness, sport shooting and Party involvement, especially through closer contact with National Socialist organizations such as the SA, the SS and the Hitler Youth.¹²¹ Shooters were grouped into four sharpshooting 'gangs' (*Schützenbanne*) that corresponded to different age groups, each one offering sub-sections for rifle and pistol shooting. By subsuming these organizations under city and regional government control, Gnade hoped to eliminate competition and what he called the 'sick class spirit' of associational life's liberal roots while still drawing upon their 'great work'.¹²² *Vereine* were not outlawed, but their role in sharpshooting was minimized. Employing language that had been used since the 1920s, police planners asserted that sharpshooting would be a true *Volkssport* when all German men between the ages of sixteen and sixty could use a weapon effectively.¹²³

In his powerful capacity as Burgher Sharpshooting Society Führer, Police Director and Mayor, Gnade used a February 1934 press release to present his vision for sharpshooting in Göttingen and the BSG's crucial role:

It is the job of the Göttingen *Bürger Schützengesellschaft* of 1392, under Senator Gnade's direction, to connect with all comrades (*Volksgenossen*) in the city in an effort to popularize sport shooting. To this end every German comrade should recognize his duty to become a member of the *Bürger Schützengesellschaft*. Popularizing sport shooting thus is the only way to put on true Volk Festivals. All the sport shooting clubs in town have promised to help with this important task. By 1 April of this year, the *Bürger Schützengesellschaft* aims to have united all men, whether skilled with guns or not, thereby using sport shooting to cultivate a true *Volksgemeinschaft*.¹²⁴

Gnade's report to Reich Sport Führer Hans von Tschammer und Osten went on to spell out the ways in which coordinated sharpshooting would fulfill the

¹²¹ StadtAGö: Kl. Erwerbungen Nr. 80 IV, 1, Gnade's 1934 Report to Reichssportkommissar, quoted on p. 5.

¹²² *Ibid.* pp. 2–3, 13.

¹²³ StadtAGö: Pol-Dir. Fach 147, Nr. 8, pp. 93–94.

¹²⁴ StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 16, Bd. I BSG 1890–1935, 13 Feb. 1934 report from Führer of the Burgher Sharpshooting Society (signed A. Gnade).

BSG's efforts to expand Göttingen sharpshooting that had begun in 1925. He wrote that the December 1933 plan would take the 'healthy tradition of the old sharpshooting clubs' and 'raise what had been more or less a private affair for the affluent to a German *Volkssport*.' Even more than the BSG had done in 1925, this proposal promised to help defer the costs of membership, insurance and ammunition, and would particularly strive to bring more shooters to the festival. Gnade reported that in early 1934 membership in individual *Vereine* had ranged from 20 to 110, already an increase from the previous decade. By the end of that year, though, he claimed that the new 'gangs' boasted between 400 and 500 members and that many more men shot individually.¹²⁵

These organizational changes reflected the Third Reich leaders' ability to build changes upon previous developments. Together, the 'Führer Principle', the devaluation of *Vereine* and the promotion of individual shooting through the BSG reshaped the individual shooter's relationship with organizations that facilitated sharpshooting in Göttingen. Gradually these changes began to make sharpshooting an integral part of the Nazi régime.

The expanded and coordinated sharpshooting was displayed for the first time at the 1934 Sharpshooting Festival. With the recent, bloody purge of the SA still in the news, the paramilitary training on display at the festival appeared, by contrast, to be fully integrated into the new régime. Indeed, while emphasizing the SA's importance in the Third Reich, Gnade's speech at the festival made clear that SA members should 'relax' and take part in the festivities 'outside of service'.¹²⁶ The events and rhetoric of the 1934 festival wove recent political developments together with familiar traditions and myths.¹²⁷ Luminaries such as Reich Sport Führer von Tschammer und Osten, Regional President Hermann Muhs and Prussian Education Minister Bernhard Rust all visited that summer. Muhs told the crowds that updating sharpshooting was 'today's holy task'.¹²⁸ At the festival tent, bands played only 'German' music, and only 'German' singing or dancing was allowed.¹²⁹ Political symbols at this festival even became entertainment themselves: the fireworks show on the closing night culminated with a flaming swastika that elicited many 'oohs' and 'aahs' from spectators, according to one newspaper report.¹³⁰

Organizers, local leaders, party officials and commentators praised this *Volkfest* as the final fulfillment of sharpshooting's potential. An explanation of the reorganization from attorney (and future Town Council representative

¹²⁵ StadtAGö: Kl. Erwerbungen Nr. 80 IV, 1, Gnade's 1934 Report to Reichssportkommissar, pp. 8–11 and 6.

¹²⁶ StadtAGö: Kl. Erwerbungen 80 VI, 1, pp. 9–10.

¹²⁷ See especially coverage before and at the start of the festival in *GZ*, *GT* and the *Göttinger Nachrichten* (hereafter *GN*), 7–16 July 1934.

¹²⁸ *GN*, 16 July 1934.

¹²⁹ *GT*, 19 July 1934.

¹³⁰ *GZ*, 21 July 1934.

to the *Magistrat*) Kurt Meister detailed recent changes and their motivations. Sharpshooting, he explained, had been reorganized to manifest 'the National Socialist worldview', so Göttingers could finally celebrate a festival 'that exhibited the characteristics of a true *Volksgemeinschaft*.'¹³¹ One commentator in the new Nazi party paper echoed this line, asserting that no event or symbol embodied German society more than the Sharpshooting Festival, a 'Fest of the Volk and the *Volksgemeinschaft*' and one rooted in 'local patriotism'.¹³² A monumental historical parade displayed 3000 years of German history from the Nazi perspective and featured members of Nazi organizations, as well as university students, sports and gymnastics associations, glee clubs, professional groups, hunting associations, guilds, veterans organizations, women's clubs and of course shooters. The number of men shooting at the 1934 festival represented a significant increase from those of previous years. As a result of lower entry fees, Gnade's plan and Nazi Party financial support, over 2500 shooters from all social circles and dozens of local organizations competed for a record thirty-five prizes.¹³³ Appropriately enough, Heinrich Knüllig, a twenty-five year-old stonemason who had only recently joined the BSG as an individual shooter, was crowned Sharpshooting King that year.¹³⁴

At the 1934 festival supporters and local officials tried to show that sharpshooting was a local manifestation of National Socialist ideology. By facilitating sharpshooting's coordination, these men helped draw connections between national developments and local traditions. Even if the recent reorganization rubbed some shooters up the wrong way, it nevertheless achieved three important goals that sharpshooting leaders and supporters had pursued for nearly a decade: increasing the number of men shooting at the festival, integrating military preparedness into sharpshooting activities and further wedding sport and traditional shooting. The outlines of the 1933 reorganization came from national and regional leaders, as did the new rules about membership and

¹³¹ Published in *GZ* and *GN*, 14 July 1934 and *GT*, 14/15 July 1934.

¹³² *GN*, 9 July 1934.

¹³³ *GZ*, 16 July 1934; *GZ & GN*, 14 July 1934; *GT*, 14/15 July 1934; StadtAGö: Pol-Dir Fach 147, Nr. 8, p. 93; StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 16 Bd. I, article by District Sport Director Schünemann in *Schützen-Zeitung für Niedersachsen*, April 1934, pp. 9–10. A March 1934 letter from Gnade to Hans Hertwig claims that the society had gained 200 new members and stood at 2000 strong (StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 16 Bd. II, 9 March 1934). A May 1936 letter from Gnade to Muhs in Hildesheim supports reiterates this number from 1934 (StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 16 Bd. II, 30 May 1936). Such head counts do not appear in Weimar-era reports on Sharpshooting Festivals. However, even the most generous extrapolation from available statistics would reveal that no more than half of this number took part during the 1920s. Probably no more than twenty-five clubs that were organized for shooting (in Göttingen proper, from surrounding areas, and as divisions of athletic clubs, hunting groups, and veterans associations) ever participated in a Weimar-era festival. If these groups averaged twenty-five members, then perhaps 625 men shot as part of a *Verein*. The regular and public invitations to non-club shooters that began in 1925 might have yielded another 500 or 600.

¹³⁴ The *Göttinger Zeitung* emphasized that 'he belonged to the youngest, recently joined sharpshooting brothers' (23 July 1934).

leadership. But unlike those in many other towns, Göttingen's sharpshooting leaders generally embraced the changes of 1933 and 1934 as opportunities to fulfill plans that had been in the works for almost a decade. The reorganization succeeded, therefore, by the standards of both local sharpshooting leaders and Nazi functionaries.

V: Militarism and Sport after 1935

In many ways sharpshooting's role in German society in 1935 brings us back to the Versailles Treaty. The 1919 Peace Treaty had made sharpshooting into the most important militarized leisure activity in many German towns, placing it in the liminal space between practicing sharpshooting symbolically and employing that skill in a real military context. Hitler's decision in 1935 to break the Versailles Treaty and begin rearmament likewise reconfigured sharpshooting's status in public life. Many sharpshooters and supporters saw the ability to serve in the army as the final culmination of a decade and a half's worth of rhetoric about sharpshooting's value to the city and the nation. By the same token, the existence of a real and growing army in Germany ended any illusion about sharpshooting being an *ersatz* or potential military force and relegated it to a symbolic or training function in society. The redirection of sharpshooting activities and public discourses about them in 1933 and 1934 represented an attempt, by both national and local leaders, to make sharpshooting more a part of Hitler's new régime. Germany's 1935 rearmament similarly legitimized the paramilitary quality of sharpshooting that supporters in Göttingen had championed as a way to demonstrate local unity and affirm the national 'cause'.

The Third Reich's attempt to militarize sharpshooting activities proceeded haltingly, though, and depended upon local relationships between sharpshooters, military officials and advocates of sport shooting. Soldiers with paramilitary designs for sharpshooting headed up both the Reich Ministry for Sport and the sub-section devoted to shooting. Since military leaders and Nazi functionaries shared the belief that sport shooting helped train better soldiers, Third Reich officials used state authority to promote modern sport shooting as part and parcel of a more militarized society.¹³⁵ In 1934 the Reich Sport Ministry insisted that all sharpshooting organizations focus more on sport and military shooting. In some places, especially Catholic regions, the concept of a sharpshooting 'brotherhood' with religious connotations prompted a real split between traditional and sport shooters in the mid-1930s.¹³⁶ Göttingen

¹³⁵ Schwartz, 'Schützenvereine', pp. 448–50. Barrett even goes so far as to call the Third Reich's substantial SA paramilitary plan 'the National Socialist continuation of the youth training policy of the Weimar Republic and the Army, albeit with Nazi modification and amplification' (Barrett, 'Soldiers', p. 329).

¹³⁶ Schwartz, 'Schützenvereine'; Sauermann, 'Studien', p. 313; Gehrmann, 'Schützensilber', pp. 31–42; Stambolis, 'Schützenvereine' and 'Nation'; and Klenke, 'Überlebenstechniken', pp. 94–96.

sharpshooters did not face such a division, since religious identity had never played a role in sharpshooting there. Moreover, sport shooting had been widely supported in Göttingen since the early 1920s, and the local army garrison had taken part in activities since the late nineteenth century.

Increasingly after 1934, sharpshooting supporters and government and party officials used competitive sports to translate national goals into local contexts. The 1935 festival in Göttingen celebrated this link with the motto 'In the Spirit of Sport'. That year the Führer of German Sharpshooting, Major van Cleve, spoke at the festival and told visitors that competitive sport shooting united bodily strength, military training, tradition, patriotism and duty to serve the Fatherland.¹³⁷ Local reporting in Göttingen on sharpshooting activities underscored this focus, as newspapers increasingly covered sharpshooting activities in the sport section, rather than under local news. The papers also changed their language, employing the terms *Schießen* and *Klubs* alongside the traditional *Schützen* and *Vereine*. In 1936 the German Sharpshooting Association, the new national organization that oversaw sharpshooting, became a part of the Reich League for Physical Education. The Nazi party organ, the *Göttinger Nachrichten*, reported that the sharpshooting leadership in Göttingen rejoiced at this final and official designation of sharpshooting as a sport rather than a 'traditional' activity.¹³⁸

In particular, cultural purveyors in Göttingen used events of the 1936 summer Olympic Games in Berlin to situate local sharpshooting within larger national discussions about sport and its meaning. Commentators made liberal use of the ubiquitous Olympic coverage in local papers to emphasize Germany's long history of competitive shooting, especially when German marksmen took home one-third of the medals awarded in these events.¹³⁹ The 1936 Olympic Games, which German athletes dominated, began only days after Göttingen's Sharpshooting Festival ended that summer. A *Tageblatt* report on the festival called sharpshooting the 'centre of sporting competition' and suggested that the Olympics would highlight the connection between sharpshooting's history as 'ancient Germanic competition' and present-day function as a 'people's event' (*Volksveranstaltungen*).¹⁴⁰ Out of twenty prizes awarded at Göttingen's 1936 Sharpshooting Festival, the three most important ones featured Olympic symbols.¹⁴¹ The Olympics thus offered local supporters a national and international framework within which they could place the meaning of local sharpshooting activities.

¹³⁷ *GN*, 15 July 1935.

¹³⁸ *GN*, 20 July 1936. The article's enthusiasm reflected both the reaction of sharpshooting leaders and the continued role of local papers in constructing sharpshooting's image.

¹³⁹ Richard D. Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics* (New York, 1971), p. 192; *GT*, 14, 15 July 1936.

¹⁴⁰ *GT*, 14 July 1936.

¹⁴¹ *GT*, 15 July 1936.

Despite these fairly simplistic equations in the local press, the actual process by which the state became integrated into daily cultural activities remained complex and was sometimes contested. At a December 1935 meeting of the *Bürger Schützengesellschaft* leadership, for instance, BSG members complained to local officials on the board about insufficient municipal funding. One local official, Hertig, replied that 'the opposition in the *Bürger Schützengesellschaft* is nothing more than a reaction against the present state!' Springing to his feet, one sharpshooter and BSG member, Karl Tasch cried, 'that is a baseless piece of impertinence!' Mayor Gnade had to step in to quell the conflict, but another BSG representative obliquely warned Hertig, 'don't wrap yourself in foreign furs.'¹⁴²

Similarly, even two and a half years after the 1933 reorganization, Gnade and other officials still worried about its efficacy and impact. In a May 1936 report to his friend, Regional President Hermann Muhs, Gnade recognized that 'the reorganization of course broke with old, outdated traditions and that there was naturally resistance directed from, above all, the complainant Tasch and his supporters.' Members of Tasch's 1863 Club, Gnade reported, 'have continued to work against the new formation of sharpshooting', and indeed the club's own celebratory history argues as much.¹⁴³ Gnade went on to say that moulding sharpshooting the way the Reich Sport Führer wished would require 'clubs to be cleaned of members who would ruin this work because of their old social prejudices' but that he doubted that such heavy-handed tactics would work. He reminded Muhs that his 'election' as Sharpshooting Führer in 1933 had angered a number of shooters in town, since they could not very well oppose the local leader of the SS. And though Gnade was pleased that the 1933 reorganization did not come across as mere 'propaganda material', he nonetheless worried that the new plan would not succeed or might even undermine the Third Reich's designs on sharpshooting, as happened in other places.¹⁴⁴

By 1935 the Nazi régime had, however, become an important element in Göttingen's sharpshooting activities, both symbolically and actually. In fact, the decline in overt zeal to refashion sharpshooting thereafter signalled that the stable constellation of power overseeing sharpshooting had normalized the Third Reich's function in these everyday activities. Clubs, for instance, no longer constituted a threat and returned to prominence after 1934, alongside the state-sanctioned 'gangs'. Individual shooting through the BSG declined

¹⁴² StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 16 Bd. II, Niederschrift from 30 Dec. 1935 meeting of *Führerrates* und *Gläubigerausschusses der BSG*.

¹⁴³ StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 16 Bd. II, 10 May 1936 letter from Gnade to Muhs, pp. 1–7; Damrau and Schröder, *Schützenverein*, p. 97.

¹⁴⁴ StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 16 Bd. II, 10 May 1936 letter from Gnade to Muhs, pp. 8–12. On this trend elsewhere, see Schwartz, 'Schützenvereine'.

somewhat as more men shot with military, SA, SS and even Hitler Youth groups.¹⁴⁵

Sharpshooting's coordination into the Third Reich was, in the end, a process of integration and even mutual co-optation. Nazi officials succeeded in coordinating sharpshooting, insofar as they constructed national policies regarding sports and military training that resonated with local traditions and organizations. In many ways, the Third Reich's politicization of sharpshooting expanded this activity's appeal, as well as that of Hitler's régime. Rearmament and the pageantry surrounding the 1936 Olympics reiterated the interdependence of nation and locality. Despite all the rhetoric about sharpshooting's role in building a better army and its place at 'the heart of all sporting competition', it continued to thrive in Göttingen mainly because it remained a vibrant and popular local cultural activity.¹⁴⁶ The Nazi régime's greater interest and involvement in sharpshooting only added a layer of significance to local activities that were already imbued with a variety of meanings. When Wilhelm Lange, head of the *Bürger Schützengesellschaft*, told the big crowd of shooters, city officials and revellers at the 1936 Sharpshooting Festival Dinner that 'an armed populace [*Volk*] is the goal of the sharpshooting organizations and the will of the Führer', he was reflecting as much as enforcing a common agenda.¹⁴⁷

The tendency to combine sport, military training, entertainment and local traditions continued until the outbreak of war in 1939. Local military officials and sharpshooting leaders cooperated closely with each other. When a 1939 law stipulated that only army teams be allowed to shoot in the festival, the long, cordial relationship between members of the *Bürger Schützengesellschaft* and Göttingen's garrison allowed local clubs to continue to shoot. Though the war halted most sharpshooting activities, some of the older shooters and younger students managed to cobble together meetings and competitions throughout the war.¹⁴⁸ After the fighting ended the Allies banned sharpshooting as a military-related activity. British occupation forces first allowed clubs to begin reforming in 1948, and by 1949 Göttingen shooters were meeting again and had organized a meagre sharpshooting festival. In West Germany during the 1950s, sharpshooting grew almost as much as it had during the Weimar years. Many of the 'old shooters' who were active in the 1920s and 1930s drew upon past traditions as part of the postwar rebuilding process. However, new laws governing associational life in the Federal

¹⁴⁵ A January 1936 report listed 895 members (StadtAGö: AHR I B 5,6 Nr. 16 Bd. II, 1 Jan. 1936 report of *Bürger Schützengesellschaft*). And while that number probably grew around the festival, it was certainly lower than the figures reported in 1934.

¹⁴⁶ *GT*, 14 July 1936.

¹⁴⁷ *GT*, 23 July 1936.

¹⁴⁸ Schützenverein Scharnhorst's protocol book, for instance, notes a meeting of 15 members (out of 31 active) on 15 May 1944.

Republic and greater participation (such as the founding of women's and mixed sex clubs) separated 1950s clubs from those of the Weimar and Third Reich. As bookends to this era, the two world wars represented more significant breaks than the Nazis' ascension to power in 1933.

VI: Conclusions

This essay has emphasized the gradual changes in Göttingen's sharpshooting activities and discourses about it over the course of the 1920s and 1930s. Certainly sharpshooting in 1936 was different than in, say, 1926. It had in fact been Nazified by the mid-30s. The factors that enabled the Third Reich to integrate sharpshooting into the fabric of the régime highlight a decade-long process of Nazification that began in the mid-twenties. Starting around 1925 sharpshooting leaders, individual members and local supporters promoted a vision of sharpshooting that minimized political and economic tensions, chiefly at the expense of the Left. Conservatives viewed sharpshooting as a manifestation of German militarism that espoused pre-Weimar myths of 'unity' and emphasized masculine duty. With this *völkisch* notion of participation in mind, they took steps to increase the number of men taking part in sharpshooting activities, in particular by encouraging individual shooting. National Socialist coordination of sharpshooting in Göttingen drew upon these indigenous plans and ideas. Senator Reuper's 1929 assertion about sharpshooting 'protecting [Göttingen's] unity'—should perhaps be modified to state that sharpshooting actually helped to *create* a notion of unity—or at least the image of one. Starting in the 1920s, that idea served to update sharpshooting and weave it into the fabric of both the Weimar Republic and Third Reich. Connecting masculine, military duty and local identity, sharpshooting thus helped to build nationalism by promoting community based on a notion of the *Volk* rather than the citizenry. The Nazis' success at using sharpshooting to promote their ideology testifies as much to importance of local conditions for national change as it does to the need for ideology to adapt to local conditions. It was, after all, in their towns, villages and neighbourhoods that Germans experienced and were a part of changes that ultimately did alter their nation.

Abstract

This article uses the history of sharpshooting (*Schützenwesen*) in Göttingen to explain the integration of National Socialist ideas into daily life in interwar Germany. As both a public and private cultural practice, sharpshooting makes especially clear the political implications of everyday activities. In the 1920s sharpshooting leaders in Göttingen

expanded the scope of participation and activities by encouraging more men to take part in competitions, both as members of clubs and as individuals, with the ultimate goal of making every man in town a 'shooter'. Even as they welcomed men from all political and social backgrounds, leaders and supporters solidified a definition of participation based on gender and race rather than democratic equality. This conservative expansion and the discourses surrounding it strengthened the position of middle-class men who had traditionally dominated sharpshooting. It also enabled the Third Reich to make use of sharpshooting to promote its ideology and military preparedness. At the same time, the 'coordination' (*Gleichschaltung*) of sharpshooting required Nazi leaders in Göttingen to negotiate, not dictate, their role in these activities. By studying these developments over the entire interwar period, this analysis demonstrates the centrality of local conditions and individuals to the gradual integration of ideas that ultimately lent support to Hitler's régime.

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